



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **Road safety and young children**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

Topic:

Road Safety and Young Children

Objectives:

- To raise adult awareness about the statistics of child death and injury on South Africa's roads.
- To inform them that young children lack the ability to judge speed and distance, and are also unpredictable in their behaviour in traffic.
- To inform them of some basic road safety skills they can teach their young children.
- To emphasize the importance of a responsible adult present at all times when young children are near traffic.

- To inform them what safety measures to take in vehicle travel.
- To encourage them to check the drivers' licences and vehicle safety of any transport to ECD centre or school.

Introduction

The last two weeks we have focussed on keeping our young children safe by ensuring there is always a responsible adult watching over the children and putting in place some simple measures to prevent accidents, fires, burns and poisoning. Today we look at another major killer of young children – road traffic. South Africa has a terrible record when it comes to deaths and injuries on our roads. 47 people are killed every day on our roads, more than 14 000 in a year and more than 40% of these are pedestrians. Road accidents kill people on the same scale as AIDS, malaria and TB. Children die on our roads every day and many of these deaths are preventable. When children are young they need a responsible adult with them, and as they grow and develop, we need to teach them how to be safe on the road.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. Surely when it comes to road safety and pedestrians it is the drivers who are at fault?</p>	<p>Certainly South African drivers have a poor record when it comes to dangerous driving, but there is much that pedestrians can do to keep themselves safe and to ensure that safety practices become a habit with their children.</p>
<p>2. What are the safety practices when you are walking along a road that parents should teach their young children?</p>	<p>Many South Africans, including children and especially in rural areas, walk long distances to catch public transport, to clinic, to school, to town, to neighbours. Often there are no pavements, sometimes dirt roads throw up clouds of dust from passing vehicles, and</p>

sometimes roads are narrow or overgrown with bushes on the side. Impatient drivers, often speeding, do not watch out for pedestrians as carefully as they should. This means that pedestrians have to be EXTRA careful when walking alongside or crossing a road.

- When there is no pavement, the rule is to **walk as far as possible to the right hand side of the road facing on-coming traffic**. This means you are away from the road and can see vehicles long before they are close to you, and if anything looks dangerous you can quickly move even further away. Make this a habit yourself, and teach this to your child EVERY time you take them on the road. Repetition is important. Young children have very short memory spans and need constant repetition and practice.
- Wear bright coloured clothing and teach your children to do the same, so that they are more easily seen by drivers. The rule here is '**see and be seen**'. If you are walking on the road at night, wear white clothing.

3. *And what about crossing the road?*

There is one simple rule to teach your children about crossing the road – **always stop and look before you cross – look right, left and right again for oncoming traffic**.

- Only cross when the road is clear,

you've looked in both directions and listened for oncoming traffic. If you are in a rural area, look for a straight stretch of road, away from sharp bends or anything that blocks your view such as bushes or a steep rise. When you cross, you must be able to see clearly in both directions.

- When you cross, **walk briskly, straight across, but don't run.**
- When you cross near a bus or taxi stop, or if there are lots of parked cars, you need to be especially careful that you **can see and be seen.**
- In towns, where possible cross at a controlled crossing – a traffic light – and only cross when the green man shows. Teach your children never to cross when the lights are orange or red. There's a delightful road safety song: 'Green means go; yellow means slow and red means stop'. Make up your own tune and teach it to your young children.
- At a **zebra crossing, never expect vehicles to stop.** Drivers often don't notice zebra crossings. Practice the same road safety rules for crossing an unmarked road.
- **NEVER jay walk** or wind your way through moving traffic, especially with

<p>4. <i>Why is it that young children are so vulnerable on our roads? Surely they can watch out for moving vehicles?</i></p>	<p>young children. Remember, they will copy you; they will do what you do & not what you say.</p> <p>Remember that young children are developing all the time. When they are little, they are not able to judge the speed of a car or how close it is. They also don't know how long it will take for a car to stop. Also, they don't pay attention for long and are impulsive and easily distracted. So if they are carrying a picture they have painted or a ball, and drop it so that it goes into the road, they might rush after it without thinking to stop and look to see if a car is coming. Even when you have taught them the rules of the road, you cannot rely on them to remember. That's why it is SO IMPORTANT that there is always a responsible adult with them. It is not safe to send a little one on the road, even with an older child. Not even older children are totally reliable in traffic and may not know what to do in the event of an accident.</p>
<p>5. <i>What about young children travelling in a car? How do we make sure they are safe?</i></p>	<p>If you own a car, it is most important that you buy a good quality car seat that is the right size for the weight and age of your baby or toddler. NEVER travel with your baby on your lap. Should your car be involved in an accident, even if travelling slowly, it has the same effect as dropping your baby from the window of a 4 storey building. You WILL NOT be able to hold on to your baby and your baby will become a</p>

<p>6. <i>What about public transport? Is there anything we can do to be safer in buses or taxis?</i></p>	<p>flying missile. All children should be seated and strapped in with the safety belt. They must know that this is the rule – no journey in a car unless they are strapped in. You can keep them occupied by playing language games like ‘I spy with my little eye, something beginning with ‘t’ (tree); or counting red cars; or numbers of trucks; or looking for the letter that starts their name in advertising signs. Be creative and make up games to keep their minds busy and build their language skills at the same time. For long journeys, stories are a wonderful way of passing the time. Never let your child put heads, arms or hands out of the window – they can be seriously injured by passing traffic.</p> <p>We can teach our children safety rules about getting on and off public transport – never rushing or getting on or off a moving vehicle. And they need to be seated the whole time the vehicle is moving. This again is a time to be creative in keeping your young child occupied in playing thinking or language games. When getting off public transport, it’s the time to remember to reinforce all the road safety rules and habits we want them to practice. If you feel the public transport driver is driving recklessly, for goodness sake get off at the next stop and make another arrangement to get to your destination. It’s better to get there alive and safe than to be involved in an accident.</p>
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7. *There has been a lot of publicity about over-crowding and unsafe transport of children to ECD centres and school. Often parents have few options and have to use this transport to get their children to pre-school or school. What can they do?*

You are absolutely right. There has been a lot of publicity about many children being crammed into vehicles to get to ECD centres or school. And often these vehicles are bakkies, sometimes open and sometimes with canopies. We realise parents often have few options, but there are things a parent can do to try and ensure the safety of their precious children. And **it is your responsibility** to take action and protect your child from unnecessary risks of injury or death. Some of the things you can do are:

- Ask to see the driver's licence to check that it is valid and unendorsed. If you are paying for transport, the driver should have the driver's licence that allows him to take paying passengers.
- Check that the vehicle is licensed and is road worthy. For example, have a look at the tyres and make sure they all have good tread.
- **Do not send your children in the back of a bakkie**, even one with a canopy. If the vehicle is involved in an accident or rolls over, there is NO PROTECTION for passengers and they will be seriously injured or killed.
- check that the driver is not over-loading the vehicle with too many children. In a car, every child should have a seat belt. Often unscrupulous drivers will compromise the safety of children by

	<p>over-loading to make money. If the driver will not listen, talk to the parents of the other children in this transport and together take action, or find alternative transport. Some drivers will only obey the rules when it hurts their pocket.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsafe drivers or vehicles can be reported to the police or the road traffic department. Then you need to follow up to make sure action is taken.

Conclusion

So once again, you’ve mentioned the **RESPONSIBILITY** that parents or caregivers have to protect children and keep them safe from the many dangers in their environment. Young children have a **RIGHT** to be protected and are not able to protect themselves. And we know that there should always be a responsible adult watching young children wherever they are and most especially when they are near any form of traffic. As babies develop into toddlers and become young children, parents, caregivers and ECD centre teachers need to teach them road safety habits and keep reinforcing these through repetition, games, role play and practice, until these practices become a **HABIT** for the young child. **Be the adult – play your part.**

Be sure to listen again next week to our next topic in the important area of early childhood development.

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- know the horrific statistics on road deaths in South Africa and that many of these are deaths of children.
- understand that young children lack the ability to judge speed and distance, and are also unpredictable in their behaviour in traffic.
- be aware of the importance of knowing and practicing road safety rules and teaching these to their children.
- know that there should always be a responsible adult present at all times when young children are near traffic.
- know what safety measures they can take when travelling in a vehicle.
- gain some ideas on how they can check on drivers and vehicles transporting children to ECD centres and schools and what action they can take.